

# Understanding and Coping with Depression: A Manual



## Part 3 Keep Making Progress

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## PART 3

### Keep Making Progress

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# Progress Report

You may wonder how much you have learned since you began using the Understanding and Coping with Depression manuals. You have worked on reducing your symptoms of depression and developed more coping skills. Now is a good time to check your progress.

? Check each statement that is true for you.

Q I know more about the symptoms of depression.

Q I know more about what can cause people to be depressed.

Q I know more about how depression is treated.

Q I am becoming better at recognizing my symptoms of depression.

Q I am learning to identify situations, behaviors, and thoughts that contribute to my depression.

Q I am learning skills to cope with my depression.

Q I have increased my pleasant activities.

Q I practice relaxation skills.

Q Family or friends have made positive comments about my progress.

Q My medical provider says my depression has improved.

If you checked any of the boxes above, you are making progress toward reducing your depression! Keep up the good work! Now let's look more specifically at your progress...

? Look back at the “Getting Involved in Your Treatment” exercise you did in Part 1 of the manual (page 33). On the chart below, write down the goals and contributions you listed in that section. Then use the Goal Scale (below) to show your progress toward each of your goals.

“Getting involved in your treatment” Goal

Progress Rating  
(from Goal Scale)

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### Goal Scale

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
Have not started working on goal		Have begun working on goal			Have partially met goal		Have met most of goal		Have completely met goal	

? Now, do you want to change any of your goals? What do you think will help you achieve the old or new goal? Write down some things that may help you achieve your goals.

Revised or new goal

What will help you achieve this goal?

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## Depression Rating Form

Indicate how often you have each of the following symptoms of depression by circling one number for each symptom. This will give you a starting point for monitoring your mood. Fill out these forms once a week to monitor any changes in your mood. As you feel better, your total number will get smaller.

Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

	Never	Sometimes	Frequently
1. Persistently feeling down, sad, blue, tearful or irritable	0	1	2
2. Difficulty sleeping, insomnia, waking too early, or sleeping too much	0	1	2
3. Feeling fatigued, slowed down or lacking energy	0	1	2
4. Feeling restless or unable to sit still	0	1	2
5. Changes in appetite: weight gain or loss	0	1	2
6. Loss of interest in friends and activities previously enjoyed	0	1	2
7. Feeling helpless, worthless, or guilty	0	1	2
8. Feeling pessimistic or hopeless	0	1	2
9. Problems concentrating, thinking, remembering, or making decisions	0	1	2
10. Thinking about death or suicide	0	1	2
11. Recurring aches and pains (such as headache, stomach ache, back pains) which do not respond to medical treatment	0	1	2
12. Anxiety, nervousness and tension	0	1	2

Add up all circled numbers

Total \_\_\_\_\_

## Plan to Monitor and Prevent Future Depression

For some people, depression comes and goes over time. While the many ups and downs we experience in life are normal, it is important to keep the downs from becoming an episode of depression. Having and using the tools you have learned in the manual will help you stay healthy. The purpose of this section is to give you an example of how to monitor depression symptoms and other situations that could set-back your recovery. Remember Mr. Jones? Let's see what is new with him.

Mr. Jones knows that he feels tense and anxious when his son stays with him. The situation often makes him feel discouraged and dissatisfied with himself. He now recognizes how those feelings can hurt his ability to have positive interactions with his son. He has discovered that he can reduce his anxiety and general feelings of tension if he practices his relaxation exercises for 10 minutes before breakfast every day during his son's visits. Now he also does relaxation exercises before stressful situations, such as going to the grocery store with his son or when the bills come. He has noticed that he gets fewer headaches during periods when he practices relaxation. When difficult situations occur, Mr. Jones makes time to do a Thought Chart to help his moods from getting severe. Since Mr. Jones knows his son will be in town next month, he knows he must find time to do his relaxation routine. Usually he practices relaxation 2-3 times a week, but he starts doing daily relaxation about a week before his son's arrival.


At this point, like Mr. Jones, you have probably discovered some skills that help you deal with situations that trigger or worsen your depression. You may agree that a bit of prevention is better than treatment. You already know that it is unpleasant and painful to be depressed, both for you and those around you. Since it is much easier to get out of a mild depression than a severe one, it is helpful to pay attention to individual symptoms before depression becomes more serious. You can make a prevention plan by anticipating and writing down situations or problems and how you plan to deal with them if they arise. Having a plan can help if you find yourself becoming depressed again.

### Plan to Monitor and Prevent Future Depression

You have already learned to recognize symptoms of your depression, and you have some skills to help you recover. The same type of awareness is necessary to help prevent future episodes of depression. Both take active effort and awareness on your part.


Evaluate your depression monthly by filling out the Depression Rating Form (copies located in the Extra Forms section at the back of Part 3). Choose an event that happens at regular intervals and rate your depression symptoms on that day. Put the date on your date-book or calendar to help you remember. Some people choose the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the month or the day they get their paycheck or social security check or the day before they have an appointment with their provider.

#### Monitoring Plan

 I plan to monitor my mood and depression with the Depression Rating Form every month on/when \_\_\_\_\_ (insert reminder event or date here).

After filling out the Depression Rating Form, if you have a score greater than your previous score, start practicing your coping skills. If you are seriously depressed (for example, scoring 14 or more, not doing your regular daily activities, or thinking about killing yourself) CALL YOUR MEDICAL PROVIDER RIGHT AWAY.

You also may have specific symptoms that are more common or particularly troublesome. By monitoring specific symptoms you will become more aware of your depression and when to use your coping skills to manage those symptoms.

 Use the worksheet on the next page to identify your most common or troublesome symptoms. (Use an extra page if needed.) Define how you experience each symptom as severe, moderate, or mild (See Mr. Jones's example). Also, indicate the skills you have used in the past to successfully cope with that symptom.

Every month, after you have filled out the Depression Rating Form, refer to this symptom list to check the severity of your symptoms. Then decide specifically how you want to manage the symptom.

**MR. JONES'S EXAMPLE**

Symptom	Levels
<u>Feeling slowed down/low energy</u>	Severe is: <u>Lying in bed most of the day</u>
	Moderate is: <u>Watching TV is my main activity</u>
	Mild is: <u>Staying home most days, less activity</u>
Coping Skills for this symptom: <u>Get more fresh air and exercise, plan pleasant activities with other people</u>	

Symptom	Levels
_____	Severe is _____
	Moderate is _____
	Mild is _____
Coping Skills for this symptom _____	

Symptom	Levels
_____	Severe is _____
	Moderate is _____
	Mild is _____
Coping Skills for this symptom _____	

Symptom	Levels
_____	Severe is _____
	Moderate is _____
	Mild is _____
Coping Skills for this symptom _____	



Research has shown that stress can negatively affect both physical and mental health. Stressful events can disrupt or permanently change your life. Stressful events in your life, such as marital difficulties or a major illness, may increase the likelihood that new problems will arrive and old ones such as depression, may get worse.

### Anticipate Stressful Events

✍ What stresses do you think might happen during the next 6 months? Check any possibilities on the list below.

#### Possible Stressful Events During the Next 6 Months

- ☐ Changes in health (your own or a loved one's)
- ☐ New job or new responsibilities at work or home
- ☐ Retirement
- ☐ Financial difficulties or debts
- ☐ Grieving the loss of a loved one
- ☐ Trauma or anniversary of trauma
- ☐ Reunion, with friends or family
- ☐ Marriage, divorce, separation, or relationship difficulties
- ☐ Death of a loved one
- ☐ Moving
- ☐ Birth of a child
- ☐ Child leaving or returning home
- ☐ Legal problems
- ☐ Fired or lay-off from a job
- ☐ Loss of property from fire, theft, etc.
- ☐ Alcohol, drug or sobriety issues
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Frequently, stressful events can be anticipated. Working in advance to prepare for them can reduce their impact. When you foresee a stressful event or time you may find it helpful to create a “coping plan.” A coping plan includes anticipating the event, identifying the specific ways in which the stressful event may affect your life and normal activities, and noting specific skills and techniques that may help you cope. Ask yourself, “How will this stressful event affect my...”

◆ Social life	◆ Mood
◆ Family/friends	◆ Responsibilities at home or work
◆ Physical well-being	◆ Finances
◆ Free time	◆ Other _____

Prepare for stressful events and effects by identifying skills that will help you. Plan when and how you will use these skills using the worksheet on page 12. As an anticipated event approaches, use your knowledge of your symptoms (or depression rating forms) to monitor your depression more closely. If your symptoms worsen, use more elements from your plan. Here’s what Mr. Jones wrote on his Stressful Events form:

Stressful event	Effects	Useful Skills and Techniques
In October, my son is coming to stay with me for 3 weeks.	My tension and irritability will increase. I may get more headaches.	Increase relaxation exercises to every morning before Tom’s arrival, every morning during his stay and other times if necessary. Plan time by myself.
In November I am having surgery. Recovery will take 4-6 weeks.	I will have to spend more time at home, resting and being less active.	Engage in 2 pleasant activities per day. Find new pleasant activities that I can do while recovering. Decide what I will do and start doing them in October so they are part of my routine.
My car might break down again and I can’t afford to fix it.	I can’t get to the grocery store or to my appointments at the hospital.	Ask my daughter to take me to appointments. Learn to use the bus system so that I can get around by myself. See if neighbor would be willing to carpool to the store.



Exercise helps many people relieve stress and anxiety

## Anticipate Stressful Events

? On the chart below list some stressful events (such as those you checked on page 7) as possibly (or definitely) occurring in your life during the next 6 months. Be specific and include the possible effects on your social life, physical well-being, etc. You can use this worksheet anytime you think a stressful event may occur.

[illegible]

Note: if you believe one of these events may be a serious crisis for you, contact your primary care provider or social worker. They may be able to give you other suggestions about coping.

## Skill Maintenance Plan

? Write down the main skills you have worked on (ether with the manual or on your own) to help control depression. For each skill indicate your plan to continue that skill so that you continue to gain the benefit.

Skill

Maintenance Plan

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Remember, you can use the manual's exercises and worksheets to practice and improve your skills.

## Summary

Three very important ways you can continue to recover as well as help prevent a depression relapse in the future are by:

- Regularly assessing your symptoms
- Anticipating and planning for stressful events
- Maintaining your coping skills



## Other Depression Resources

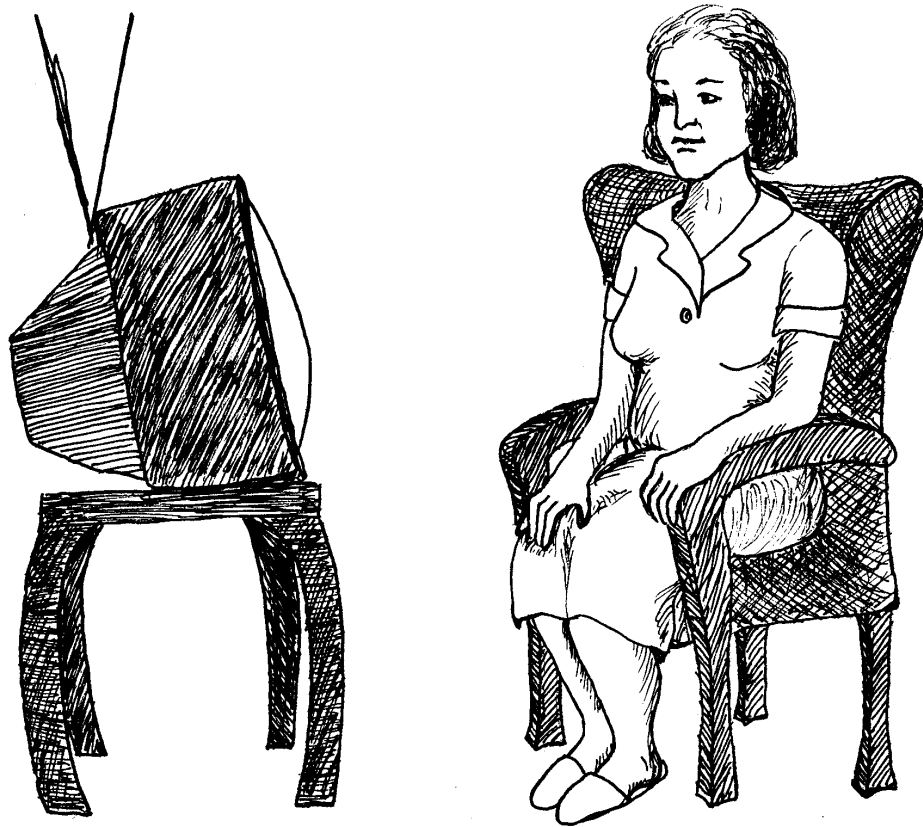
If you are interested in getting other information about depression and depression related topics we recommend the following materials. Many of these resources are at the public library, your medical center's library (or patient education center), or bookstores. Your mental health provider or social worker may also have information or materials to give you.

### Videos

"Depression: Self-Care Companion for Better Living" with C. Everett Koop, from Time Life Medical © 1996

"Taking Control of Depression: Mending the Mind" with Ed Asner, from the National Institute of Mental Health, XENEJENEX Productions, © 1991

"At the Time of Diagnosis: Depression" with C. Everett Koop from Time Life Medical © 1996



Check your local library for videos and books about depression.

## Books

*Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions* by Kate Lorig and colleagues

A self-management book for people with heart disease, arthritis, strokes, diabetes, asthma and other medical conditions.

*Mind Over Mood* by Greenberger and Padesky

A self-help book with exercises for working on specific skills and issues related to depression, such as changing thinking.

*Depression (Recurrent & Chronic) Self Care Companion for Better Living* from Time Life Medical

General information about depression its causes and treatments, plus everyday insights and strategies to help you take better care of yourself and your depression.

*The Depression Workbook* by Mary Ellen Copeland

A depression self-help book with exercises and strategies for coping with depression.

*Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy* by David Burns, M.D.

Self-help using cognitive therapy techniques to overcome depression.

Also by Dr. Burns *The Feeling Good Handbook*

*How to Heal Depression* by Harold Bloomfield and Peter McWilliams

Information about depression and strategies for overcoming it.

*Darkness Visible* by William Styron

A personal story told by a well-known author about his experiences with depression.

## Internet Sites<sup>\*</sup>

### VA Clinical Practice Guidelines for MDD

[http://www.oqp.med.va.gov/cpg/MDD/MDD\\_Base.htm](http://www.oqp.med.va.gov/cpg/MDD/MDD_Base.htm)

[http://www.oqp.med.va.gov/cpg/MDD/MDD\\_cpg/content/appendices/mdd\\_app1\\_fr.htm](http://www.oqp.med.va.gov/cpg/MDD/MDD_cpg/content/appendices/mdd_app1_fr.htm)

### Depression in Primary Care

<http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR1198/>

<http://www.mentalhealth.com/bookah/p44-d1.html>

<http://www.mentalhealth.com/bookah/p44-d2.html>

<http://www.depression-primarycare.org/>

### US Army Depression Pilot Initiative (includes tool kit)

<http://www.cs.amedd.army.mil/qmo/depress/depress.htm>

### Women & Depression

<http://www.aafp.org/afp/990700ap/225.html>

<http://www.aafp.org/afp/990700ap/990700e.html>

[http://www.psychguides.com/gl-treatment\\_of\\_d\\_in\\_w.html](http://www.psychguides.com/gl-treatment_of_d_in_w.html)

### Geriatric Depression

[http://www.psychguides.com/gl-pharmacotherapy\\_of\\_geriatric\\_depression.html](http://www.psychguides.com/gl-pharmacotherapy_of_geriatric_depression.html)

### General Wellness Information

<http://www.gettingwell.com/>

<sup>\*</sup> If you do not have a computer or World Wide Web (WWW) access, inquire about the computer and WWW resources at your local public library.